

as nice as they could with flowers, and they had prepared quite a dainty tea. Even with the small pension given to them by the Government they were now almost penniless, but they would work.

Antigone, with her remarkable face, was the proudest and firmest on this point. Still, it was kind of Uncle Jasper to come to see them, and darling, beloved mother had begged of them to be nice when they met him. She told them, her darlings, how much he and she had loved each other once.

"We had a quarrel, darlings, which I cannot explain," said the mother, "but I know my Jasper, and I am certain he will be good to you."

"Antigone," cried Freda, "don't look so ridiculously haughty. Uncle Jasper did not even know we were in London. He only got the lawyer's letter yesterday and he is coming to see us immediately. Be nice to him now. Don't spoil our prospects, you silly little goose."

Antigone gave a quick sigh. She would do nothing for Eve, Freda, Effie, or Joan, but she would do anything in the wide, wide world for that beloved mother who had passed on to a better and more beautiful home.

Then there came the sound of wheels in the little street below, the familiar sound of the stopping of a motor-car and immediately afterwards a very smartly-dressed, aristocratic-looking man was ushered into the presence of the five girls.

Antigone gave one brief sigh of relief. He was not the least like her mother, but he was a gentleman. Antigone stood a little apart, but Eve, Freda, Effie, and Joan crowded round.

On purpose he put on a jovial air. "Now I wonder which is which," he said. "Let's have a guess, nieces. I'm Uncle Jasper, dear old Uncle Jasper, and—let me see, is not this dear little girl Miss Eve? Ah, Eve, what mischief your mother did to the world. I see by your blushes, my child, I am right. But you, pretty creature, could not injure the world."

"I hope not, indeed, Uncle Jasper," said Eve.

"Well—now, let me go on guessing. This is Freda and this is Effie, this is Joan. But where is Antigone? Where's my Greek goddess? Ah, I see her. Come forward, you lovely thing. Let the old uncle have a look at you. Upon my word, upon my word!

EVEN Antigone's pride was melted by the agreeable manners of Uncle Jasper. Each girl gave the old man a kiss, but Antigone's was a very slight one and only touched his brow—it was a fairy kiss, but it pleased him somehow the most.

The six crowded round the shabby little table, and the five young maidens waited on Uncle Jasper. He was certainly much better than they had imagined. He joked, he laughed, he told them old stories about their mother. Finally he declared his intention of paying their lodgings while they were obliged to stay in Bloomsbury.

"And, my dear children," was his final remark, "before I go into my ultimate plan for us all, allow me to present you with this trifle."

Here he produced his two hundred pounds in ten pound notes.

"Now, children," he said, "all expenses incurred here will be paid by me, and this money is to provide you with hats and dresses, and what else you require on one condition, my loves."

"And what is that, Uncle?" asked Effie.

"It is this, dear little maid. My beloved Clem and I could not bear what is called mourning for the dead. Get pretty coloured things."

"You are a darling, kind old man," said Freda, who was most affectionate.

"And we none of us like mourning," said Antigone.

"Oh, Antigone," said Effie, "wasn't the mother right about Uncle Jasper? She said over and over again that he was the best man living."

"That's all right, children. I dislike praise. Of course, I adored your mother. Now, sit round me and let me propound my scheme."

(To be continued.)



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